

## REVIEWS OF BOOKS

**Shuster, George N.** (Editor). *The Problem of Population*. Vol. I, *Moral and Theological Considerations*. 1964. Pp. xiv+161. Price 95c; Vol. II, *Practical Catholic Applications*. 1964. Pp. xiv+185. Price \$1.25; Vol. III, *Educational Considerations*. 1965. Pp. x+198. Price \$1.25. Notre Dame, Indiana. University of Notre Dame Press.

THESE THREE VERY interesting paperback volumes contain in all twenty-nine papers and discussion reports from conferences which were held at Notre Dame University in September 1963, in the spring of 1964, and in March 1965. They range over the whole field of population problems and contraception, dealing with such varied subjects as "Relevant Currents in the History of Sexuality", "Christian Marriage and Family Planning", "Natural Law and Contraception", "Catholic Charities and Family Welfare", "Rhythm Information Programs", and "The Potential Development of Catholic Teaching". Everything relevant, from the personal life of the married to political issues, comes under discussion, including American foreign policy as it affects over-populated areas.

The conferences spanned a period of eighteen months, and in these published records it is, I think, possible to detect a definite and welcome movement of thought from the somewhat guarded and conventional (though liberally inclined) statements of Fr. Bernard Häring at the beginning of the first volume to the frank assertion by Fr. Kieran Conley at the end of the third, that the practice of contraception "is not always a venture in selfishness. Indeed it not only might be permitted; at times it should be recommended and even demanded". Throughout the volumes there is both an earnest concern to be loyal to the Roman Catholic Church, and a sensitive appreciation of pastoral problems and needs; the old theological positions are re-examined honestly, and weight is given to developments of Christian thought in other Churches.

Clearly the Roman Catholic theologians who conferred together, like many others, are acutely aware of the need for a reappraisal of their Church's teaching in the sexual field, and it is heartening to see them now embarking upon what must be a difficult and delicate task. Their discussions of the natural law, and the character and limitations of the Church's teaching *magisterium* and papal infallibility, encourage us to hope for an eventual revision of the present doctrinal position, and they deserve our support and sympathy.

Although he does not appear to have participated in the conferences, there can be no doubt that Professor Noonan's notable study, *Contraception*,\* has influenced the later discussions. On the other hand, some expected references are lacking. The treatment of "rhythm" in particular is unsatisfactory, and no mention is made of the adverse experiences recorded in Novak's *The Experience of Marriage*, which tell on the whole so strongly against this method of family planning.

SHERWIN BAILEY

## BIOGRAPHY

**Williams-Ellis, Amabel.** *Darwin's Moon: A Biography of Alfred Russel Wallace*. London, 1966. Blackie. Pp. x+239. Price 25s.

FROM ALL ASPECTS this is a delightful book; the style is pleasant, the information accurate and the subject of the biography a sincere and admirable character. The narrative is filled with interesting details of Wallace's formative years as well as his scientific abilities. Moreover, the manner in which he collected his specimens called for expeditions which even to-day can only be regarded as hazardous, and it was the sale of these specimens which were to provide his income. Then, when returning from South America, for the ship to catch fire and have to be abandoned in mid-ocean with all his precious specimens aboard,

\* See THE EUGENICS REVIEW. 1966, 58, 85.